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DEPARTMENT FOR IO/EDA MOLLY KRESS AND AF/W DANA BANKS
PLEASE PASS TO USAID/GH DALE GIBB AND JANET PHILLIPS STATE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EAID](#) [UNICEF](#) [UN](#) [BN](#)
SUBJECT: BENIN FEEDBACK ON UNICEF PROGRAMS

REF: STATE 044066

¶1. Summary: Post welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on UNICEF, a valued partner in development. The UNICEF program in Benin is effective and coordinates closely with the USG, the Government of Benin (GOB), and international donors.

¶2. UNICEF Program in Benin: Overall, the UNICEF country program document presents an accurate assessment of the health and education status (the two areas of USAID focus) in Benin. The interventions identified to improve maternal and child health status support the strategic orientations and priorities provided by the government of Benin. The country program document specifically identifies the decline in the immunization coverage as an issue and plans to support improvement of the immunization system during the 2009-2013 time period. Other interventions or practices such as exclusive breastfeeding, hand washing, use of insecticide treated nets, oral rehydration therapy and health-seeking behavior planned to be pursued are sound and fit in the strategies recommended by the Ministry of Health and supported by the WHO and other donors including USAID.

¶3. The proposed basic education program addresses some of the major factors impacting on school enrolment, retention and completion rates, in particular the weak internal efficiency of the education system, the physical and pedagogical environment, and inadequate preliminary and in-service training of teachers and supervisors. UNICEF activities to promote girls' education and in-service teacher training for community teachers support the priorities and objectives of the government of Benin as well as the extended donor community

¶4. By targeting geographic areas where important social disparities occur, complementing already existing interventions, and working to strengthen the interaction between its three sectoral programs, the proposed UNICEF country program in Benin will be an important and specific contributor to coordinated efforts focused on advancing towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

¶5. UNICEF Partnership with USG, other donors, other UN agencies, and the host country and UNICEF Effectiveness in Country:

¶6. UNICEF is an important financial and technical partner in the education, health and social sectors for USAID and other donor agencies. UNICEF is one of the most active partners in the education donor group. For example, UNICEF played a key role in the joint committee of Technical and Financial Partners assisting the Ministries of Education in the development and design of the education sector ten-year development plan. It also played an important role in the evaluation process of the plan and in Benin's acceptance into the Education for All Fast Track Initiative. UNICEF also assisted with Benin's application for Catalytic Funds, which subsequently awarded \$76.1 million to support the ten-year plan.

¶7. UNICEF works in close collaboration with several government ministries at both national and local levels. It has been effective in its collaboration with the Ministry of Family and Children in developing a policy for child protection and with the Ministry of

Justice in passing an anti-trafficking law, and a related code of conduct for transporters. UNICEF recently collaborated with the Ministry of Primary Education in developing an in-service teacher training program for community teachers, and continues to have a productive relationship with the Direction of Girls' Education in the Ministry of Primary Education. In partnership with this direction, UNICEF developed a national girls' education policy, now used in their awareness raising activities with local and district government agencies, schools and the community.

¶18. UNICEF continues to be a good partner for USAID as both institutions work together in targeted geographic areas on child health, including Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI), Malaria, and Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission of HIV. During implementation of the current country program, UNICEF has effectively worked with other donors to achieve health objectives in Benin. One specific example was UNICEF's commitment and extensive participation in the bed net distribution campaign conducted by the government of Benin in October 2007. Not only did UNICEF participate by contributing commodities (bed nets and vitamin A) like the other donors, UNICEF also enabled effective communication among the donors and provided five months of consultancy to the National Malaria Control Program to assist in designing and implementing a communication plan to support the distribution campaign. Also in malaria-specific donors' coordination, UNICEF participates in USAID/Benin's initiative to coordinate donors' efforts supporting the government in terms of policy implementation and effective use of resources under a good governance framework.

¶19. UNICEF's health interventions from 2004 to 2008 have focused on the Zou-Collines regions, thus complementing USAID's integrated Family Health Team project's interventions in the same health zones. USAID and UNICEF, together with WHO, are currently working with the Ministry of Health to conduct a review of the EPI program and assess the decline in immunization coverage during the past five years as well as investigate the underlying factors in the recent decline in child and infant mortality rates as revealed by the DHS-3 findings in order to support scaled up best and promising practices.

¶10. One weakness in the area of collaboration and coordination with the wider donor community is that the country program for 2009-2013 does not indicate whether UNICEF will continue in the same health zones or shift interventions to new geographic areas. In addition, no reference is made in the document on how and where UNICEF's planned program will complement other donors' interventions. The list of donors provided in the section on major partnerships does not answer the question of concrete steps UNICEF plans to take to make its plans for partnerships with other donors operational.

Boustani